

# Austin Financial Center

*Fiscal Digest*

*Summer 2001*



## TREASURY OFFSET PROGRAM

### Now People Can Know Their Debt Status Using Automated Call Service

Anyone making an inquiry to the Treasury Offset Program (TOP) Call Center now has the option of using the Automated Call Service, a quick way for individuals to find out if they have a non-tax debt that may affect their federal tax refund. Callers may choose this option from the TOP Call Center menu, even when the TOP Call Center is open for business. The automated call service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



#### TOP CALL CENTER

**Hours of Operation:** 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Monday – Friday

**Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-304-3107

The TOP Call Center responds to inquiries from the public concerning federal payments that may have been offset or scheduled for offset. Callers can receive information about TOP, the offset process, and their status in the TOP. Those debtors who wish to receive detailed information regarding their debt, make payment arrangements, or dispute the debt are provided with information on how to contact their creditor agency.

Both paying and creditor agencies also make inquiries to the TOP Call Center concerning Federal payment offsets. For better and faster customer service, the Financial Management Service provides direct access to the TOP database through the TOP client software for

creditor agencies. Most agencies prefer to use the direct access method. In cases where agencies do not use the direct access method, the TOP Call Center staff provides assistance. FMS created TOP in response to provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (DCIA). TOP takes advantage of the FMS centralized disbursement process by matching a database of delinquent debts owed to various Government agencies against payments made by the Government. When TOP matches a delinquent debtor record to a payment being issued, the payment is intercepted and offset to satisfy all or part of the debt.

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Each time a payment is offset to help satisfy a debt, the payee receives an offset notice from FMS providing information about the offset, along with the creditor agency address and telephone number(s). Each notice also contains the toll-free TOP Call Center number as the secondary point of contact.☛



## INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR CHANGES IN AGENCY DEPOSITS AT THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANKS

**EXTENSION FOR THE CLOSING OF FRB CASHIER'S WINDOWS FROM JUNE 30, 2001 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2001**

On February 13, 2001, the Financial Management Service (FMS) advised all Federal agency cash management liaisons of upcoming changes for making deposits at the Federal Reserve Banks, Branches, and Regional Check Processing Centers (FRBs) that would be in effect June 30, 2001.

On March 8, 2001, updated information via e-mail was sent out to all Federal agency cash management liaisons advising them that the FRB had rescinded their original proposed policy to require "cash letters" with agency check deposits.

After further discussions with Federal agencies, the FRB and FMS, it has been determined that the effective date for the closing of the FRBs' cashier windows, as well as all changes that were outlined within the FMS Bulletin No. 2001-04 dated April 16, 2001, will be extended **90 days**, from **June 30, 2001 to September 30, 2001**. This extension will afford an adequate transition period for the Federal agencies and the FMS to meet the changes in FRB deposit policy and procedures. In addition, this extension will provide agencies and the FMS additional time to make alternative banking arrangements. Federal agencies are reminded that all requests to establish a deposit arrangement with a Treasury General Account, in lieu of the FRB, should continue to be directed to the FMS' Banking Operations Branch (BOB). Federal agencies can contact representatives of BOB by calling (202) 874-6900.

We have also been advised that the following FRB locations have **CLOSED** their cashier windows as of the date of this correspondence: **Atlanta, GA, Birmingham, AL and Helena, MT**.

Additionally, the following FRB locations have indicated special deposit restrictions:

**San Antonio, TX** – Through September 30, 2001, cash deposits will be accepted, however, **ONLY** by armored car or registered mail delivery.

**Charlotte, NC, and Columbia, SC** – All Federal agency deposits currently delivered to the Charlotte, NC or Columbia, SC locations **MUST** be delivered or mailed directly to the FRB in Richmond, VA.

FMS will make every effort to provide alternative depositing arrangements for the Federal agencies. Questions or concerns should be directed to the FMS Agency Assistance Team. See the listing at <http://www.fms.treas.gov/eft/agency/liaison.html> for the representative for your agency.

You may also contact the Agency Assistance Team mailbox at: [aat@fms.treas.gov](mailto:aat@fms.treas.gov).

### TFM on the Internet

FMS is phasing out the printed distribution of Treasury Financial Manual (TFM) releases. Users may access the TFM via the Internet at the following website: <http://www.fms.treas.gov/tfm>. Effective December 2001, all TFM releases will be available on the Internet only.

### Attention FACTS II Users:

The new United States Standard General Ledger (USSGL) TFM SI-01-02 has just been released, and is now available on the USSGL web site.

Visit <http://www.fms.treas.gov/ussgl/>

Printed copies are no longer being distributed.



## Imprest Funds Goes Electronic October 1, 2001!

In 1999 FMS published the Imprest Fund Policy Directive which replaces the relevant policy sections of I TFM 4-3000 and the supplemental “Manual of Procedures and Instructions for Cashiers: (Cashiers Manual)”. The operational guidance contained in the TFM will be merged into a revised Cashiers Manual.

The Policy Directive applies to all federal payments and requires such payments to be made using non-cash methods; preferably electronic funds transfer. Imprest funds may only be used when the requirement for EFT is waived in accordance with 31 C.F.R. 208.4 and the payment meets one of five additional waiver conditions.

The Policy Directive, a fact sheet, frequently asked questions, and other information can be found on the internet at: [www.fms.treas.gov/imprest](http://www.fms.treas.gov/imprest). For further assistance or inquiries, there is an inquiry link and email address specified at the web site – or you may contact Beverly Ash in Austin at (512) 342-7305 or [beverly.ash@fms.treas.gov](mailto:beverly.ash@fms.treas.gov).

### CASHLINK II – What To Expect!

CASHLINK II is an electronic cash concentration and information system used to manage the collection of government funds and to report balances to Federal agencies.

The CASHLINK II Master plan is divided into three work packages. Each work package includes a development phase, a readiness phase, and a deployment phase.

#### MASTER PLAN SCHEDULE

Work Package	Begin	End	Subject Matter
I	8/1999	10/2001	Financial Institution, Federal Reserve Bank, FMS User Requirements
II	5/2000	3/2002	Federal Agency Requirements
III	5/2001	6/2002	New User Requirements

For more details on the new system, minutes from the meetings, and the master plan schedule, visit the CASHLINK II website at <http://www.fms.treas.gov/cashlink>.



### ***Changes in the Austin Financial Center Customer Assistance Staff***

We would like to welcome Jim Bishop to the Customer Assistance Staff as the Manager. Jim began his FMS career back in August 1992 as a Supervisor in the Payment Operations Branch, Mailing Operations Section. From there he joined the PACER staff and in July 1996 he was promoted to the Claims Branch Manager. Effective June 1, 2001, he is the new CAS Manager.

Sadly, we have had to say good-bye to Leo Turnage, better known to most as “Mr. Direct Deposit.” Leo spent many hours on the road sharing his creative ideas with agencies to develop programs to encourage Direct Deposit for benefit recipients and vendors. We are really going to miss him.

CAS also welcomes Mike Bischoff to our staff. Mike comes to us from the Payment Operations Branch Manager position, and now he’s a welcome addition to our staff.

Last, but certainly not least, what happened to Andy Anderson? Andy bid us good-bye on June 1, to take over the Claims Branch Manager’s position, and word is, he’s excited to be trying something new! We will miss him, but we wish him well.☺

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*The Austin Financial Center **Fiscal Digest** is published by the Customer Assistance Staff. It addresses a variety of topics of interest to individuals in the Federal financial community in the southwestern United States. The Austin Financial Center is one of four Regional Financial Centers of the Financial Management Service.*

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